

Testimony in Favor of Senate Bill 19 – An Act Concerning Sexual Misconduct on College Campuses

Senator Haskell, Representative Haddad, Senator Hwang, Representative Hall, and distinguished members of the committee. I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 19 – An Act Concerning Sexual Misconduct on College Campuses. This bill will require colleges and universities to provide amnesty for witnesses and survivors of sexual assault as well as require the state to create and maintain a sexual misconduct survey. These steps are key to creating an environment that protects and supports survivors of sexual misconduct. After experiencing or witnessing such a traumatic event, survivors and witnesses may be frightened or scared. It is important that the institutions that are meant to support students do not revictimize them, but rather provide support and advocacy for survivors.

The amnesty policy included in this bill would prevent colleges and universities from punishing witnesses and survivors for drug or alcohol infractions when reporting sexual misconduct. While some higher educational institutions, including my school Trinity College, already provide this type of amnesty policy, it is important that this policy is the rule rather than the exception. If students are unsure of their particular institution's policy, students will be less likely to report these troubling incidents. Feelings of certainty and safety are key in any traumatizing situation. Therefore, it is important that the state mandate one universal policy for all educational institutions in Connecticut.

The climate survey is also a key component in holding universities and colleges accountable to the greater public. Universities must maintain and address cultures of sexual harassment and having an independent climate council will aid in placing public pressure on these institutions to ensure they respond to the needs of the students, not what looks good in the press. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter and I hope that the committee will favorably report this bill.

Sincerely,

Coleman McJessy